DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 321 184 CG 022 625

TITLE	About the Middle School Years, Book 3. Activity Guide.
INSTITUTION	Virginia State Dept. of Education, Richmond.
PUB DATE	85
NOTE	23p.; For a related document, see CG 022 624.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescent Development; Career Awareness; Educational Planning; Elementary Secondary Education; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; *Middle Schools; Parent Child Relationship; Parent Responsibility; Parent School Relationship; Program Descriptions; *School Orientation; School Role; *Student Adjustment; *Student School Relationship
IDENTIFIERS	*Virginia

ABSTRACT

This guide contains a minicourse based upon the content of "About the Middle School Years, Book 3" of the Educational Opportunities in Virginia publications. The minicourse has been designed to help students, with the involvement of their parents, to begin planning for their middle school education. Included in this guide is a sequential series of five 40-minute sessions and one 75-minute guidance session to be conducted with classes of students. The sessions are on the following themes: (1) introduction activity: "What will it be like to be a middle school student?" (2) overview of middle school program of studies; (3) middle school education and its importance; (4) group presentations on previously assigned topics; (5) exploring elective courses; and (6) the relationship between interests and career choices. Two parent sessions are also included, whose purpose is to increase parents' knowledge of early adolescent development and to encourage their use of constructive childrearing methods during the middle school years. (TE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED321184

ACTIVITY GUIDE

FOR

ABOUT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS, BOOK 3

Educational Opportunities in Virginia Publications
1985

CG 022625

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

H. L. Smith

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Activity Guide for About The Middle School Years, Book 3

This guide contains a minicourse based upon the content of About The Middle School Years, Book 3 of the Educational Opportunities in Virginia Publications. The minicourse has been designed to help students, with the involvement of their parents, to begin planning for their middle school education. It is not intended as a substitute for individual counseling to make choices and decisions about middle school subjects, courses, and activities. Instead, it is a systematic program to lay the foundation for such counseling.

Included in this guide is a sequential series of five 40-minute sessions and one 75-minute guidance session to be conducted with classes of students. Parents should be encouraged to attend as many of these sessions as possible, particularly Session 3, the 75-minute session which is recommended to be held in the evening. In addition to these sessions, suggestions for holding two sessions for parents about early adolescent development and parenting techniques, based upon the information in Chapter 4 of the booklet, have been provided in the final section of this guide. (See pages 15 through 22.)

Several weeks prior to beginning this minicourse, counselors should inform students and parents of About The Middle School Years, Book 3, the minicourse, and its purposes. Parents can be informed through a variety of approaches such as parent meetings, letters, newsletters, and newspaper, radio, and television announcements. The dates and times of the sessions should be included in these announcements, and the importance of parental participation stressed.

Counselors and teachers who conduct the sessions are urged to expand or modify the activities in the guide to meet the needs and interests of their students. Each student should have a copy of About The Middle School Years, Book 3 and a notebook or part of a notebook for use in course activities. Booklets should also be made available to parents who express interest in having a copy to use as a resource with their children.

SESSION 1

Introduction Activity: What Will It Be Like to Be a Middle School Student? (15-20 minutes) (Distribute drawing paper and magic markers or colored pencils for this activity.)

- Ask the students if they have wondered what it will be like to be in middle school. Allow a few minutes for their responses. Request that they draw several objects on their papers which represent what going to middle school means to them; i.e., how they feel about making the change from elementary to middle school, and what they think it will be like to be in middle school. Set a time limit of five to ten minutes to complete this part of the activity.

- Encourage the students to show what they have drawn and to explain the meaning of their drawings. As part of this, the leader should help them

discuss how they feel about leaving elementary school and going to middle school, and what they expect middle school to be like.

- In conducting this activity, it is important to provide a climate in which students feel free to express their feelings and opinions. Help them to recognize that most students look forward to middle school but, at the same time, feel somewhat anxious about what may lie ahead for them. Acknowledge to them that feeling some anxiety about new situations is natural. Assure them that the principal, teachers, and counselors in middle school will want to help them become accustomed to their new schools and become a part of school life there. Also, explain that this minicourse will help them understand more clearly what middle school is like and what they can expect to accomplish there.

Introduction to Minicourse and Materials (20 minutes)

- State that this minicourse is being offered to help them, with the assistance of their parents, begin to plan for their middle school years. Inform them that they will learn what it is like to be a middle school student and about the subjects, courses, activities, and special programs there. They will also have an opportunity to learn more about themselves and about careers, and find out how their middle school education can help them.

- Distribute the About the Middle School booklets. Allow several minutes for the students to look through them independently. Ask for their reactions to the booklets and answer any questions they may have. Tell them that each student will need a notebook or part of a notebook for use in the course. In addition, make it clear they will need to bring their booklets and course notebooks to each session.

- Present an overview of the booklet. Start by explaining that the first three chapters are written for students and their parents, and that Chapter 4 is written specifically for parents. Ask the class to read "Why This Booklet?" on the inside of the front cover. When they have finished, discuss with them what they have read. Repeat this procedure with "What Is in This Booklet?" and "How Should Students Use This Booklet?"

- Point out the chart of educational opportunities after high school graduation (page 1) and discuss briefly each of the options shown. Emphasize middle school education as important preparation for high school and for the education, training, or employment they may want after high school. Mention also that financial aid is available for qualified students to pursue education or training after high school. Explain that many careers require education or training after high school. They should, therefore, prepare themselves for the future by getting as much education or training as possible. They can move toward this goal in middle school by carefully choosing the courses they will take and learning as much as possible from their school work.

Ask the Students to Complete the Following Activities Before the Next Session (5 minutes)

- Take the booklets home and share them with your parents. Ask your parents to read the information on the inside of the front cover. When they have finished, discuss with them what they have read. Look with your parents at the chart of educational opportunities which will be available to you after high school graduation (page 1).

- Show your parents the drawing you made during this session, and explain to them the meaning of what you have drawn.

- Read pages 3 through 8, ending at the section entitled "Middle School Programs." Ask your parents to read the same pages, and discuss with them the information on these pages. Make a list of any questions you or your parents have about the topics on these pages. Bring the list to the next session.

- With your parents, look over the rest of Chapter 1.

SESSION 2

Discussion of Assigned Reading (10 minutes)

- Review the information (pages 3-8) which students were asked to read and discuss with their parents. Respond to questions they have brought from home about the topics on these pages. Where appropriate, suggest additional sources of information they may use, such as guidance publications and library or media materials.

- Highlight and discuss with them the suggestions regarding studying and homework on page 5. Encourage them to start following these suggestions so they may establish effective study and homework practices before entering middle school.

Overview of the Middle School Program of Studies (10 minutes)

- The purpose of this activity is to begin familiarizing students with the general nature of the middle school program of studies and the importance of middle school courses in preparing for high school. A more-detailed presentation about the middle school program will be made during Session 3.

- Distribute to the class information about your local middle school program of studies. Using this information in conjunction with the information provided on pages 8 and 9 in the booklet, explain the middle school program of studies. Help them to understand the following concepts:

1. Before going to middle school, students will receive individual help in planning a program of studies for their first year there. There will also be opportunities in middle school to make changes in their programs if they so choose.

2. Some subjects are required of all students in each grade of middle school.

3. Students also choose certain courses in each grade.

4. The middle school subjects and courses students choose and how well they do in them affect the kinds of courses they may take in high school.

- Use the information from the booklet, along with information from your local middle schools, to discuss the required subjects and elective courses for grades 6, 7, and 8. Be sure the students understand the information about 9th-grade level courses, which are marked with asterisks on the charts of subjects and courses in grade 8 (page 9 of the booklet).

- Encourage and respond to students' questions as you discuss each of the above topics.

Development of Rules for Small Group Activities (10 minutes)

- For this activity to be effective, the group leader should encourage students to make suggestions and express their opinions.

- Explain that many activities in the minicourse will involve their working together in small groups. Point out that most groups have rules for members to follow. Encourage them to provide examples of some groups which have rules (clubs, teams for sports). Ask them why it is important for groups who work or play together to have rules. Elicit from them definitions of cooperation and respect and what these entail when working with others in groups. Help them also to explore the importance of each individual in a group assuming responsibility to help complete group tasks.

- Suggest that a list of rules be developed for small group activities in this minicourse.

- Lead the class in creating a list of rules, recording on the blackboard or a chart the rules suggested and accepted by them as helpful for effective group functioning. Add any other rules which seem necessary for small groups to function effectively. Be sure that rules are included regarding listening when others are talking, being open to new ideas and ways of doing things, staying on the subject or task, and showing respect for others. (Keep the list of rules on the blackboard or post the chart in the classroom for the duration of the minicourse.)

Small Group Activity (10 minutes)

- Ask the class to turn to page 10 in the booklet. Briefly summarize the content of the introductory section, "Middle School Subjects and Courses."

- Mention that most students like some school subjects better than others. Show them a chart on which you have listed the following middle school subjects: language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign language, the arts, health and physical education, and vocational education. Ask them to write on a piece of paper which one of these middle school subjects seems most interesting to them. (Allow a few moments for them to do this.)

- Ask them to find another student in the class who has written the same choice as theirs. Announce a time limit of two minutes to accomplish this.

- Call time at the end of two minutes. Help any student who has not found a partner to find one or to join a pair, thus forming a group of three, so that each person is part of a pair or a triad. Ask each pair or triad to find another group with the same choice as theirs. Have the two groups form a new group of four to six members. (Set a time limit of two minutes for this part of the activity.

- Ask the newly formed groups to prepare a brief presentation, approximately three to five minutes long, about the middle school subject they have chosen as most interesting to them. These presentations will be made at Session 4 of the minicourse and should include the following information:

    1. Why they chose the particular subject as being of highest interest to them.

    2. What they may expect to learn in studying that subject in middle school.

    3. How learning about the subject can help students now and in the future.

    4. Other information they may find of interest about the subject.

- Each group should decide on a good way to make its report. Encourage them to use their creativity in planning and preparing their presentations. For example, they may consider the use of art work, charts, dramatization, or other approaches for making their presentations.

- Stress the importance of each group member participating in the planning and preparation process.

- Tell them that the remainder of this session will be used to begin planning and preparing the presentations and that some class time over the next two weeks will be available for the groups to meet.

- Tell them that they can find information about middle school subjects in Chapter 1 of About The Middle School Years, Book 3. Have on hand and show them other resources they may use in preparing their reports, such as brochures about middle school subjects which have been developed locally.

- Announce the date of Session 4.

- Allow the remainder of this session for the groups to begin their work.

- Counselors and teachers conducting the course should be aware of the possibility that some subjects may not be selected for presentation. If this occurs, they should prepare to report on these subjects themselves.

Ask the Students to Complete the Following Activities Before the Next Session

- Look at Chapter 2 in the booklet.

- Tell your parents what you have learned about the middle school program of studies.

- Ask your parents to read pages 8 through 16 in the booklet, beginning with the section entitled "Middle School Program of Studies." In addition, ask them to look over Chapter 2.

- Invite your parents to attend with you Session 3 of this minicourse which will be held in the evening. (Give each student a written invitation for their parents. The invitation should provide the date and time of the session and an overview of information to be presented. The importance of parental participation in the session should be stressed. Urge the class to make every effort to attend with their parents.)

- Be sure to bring your booklets to Session 3.

SESSION 3

This session is devoted to helping students and parents understand the importance of middle school education, the nature of the middle school program of studies, and the special programs and activities offered in middle school. Attention is also given to the importance of studying and homework for students' success in school and how parents may help.

This session is planned to be one hour and 15 minutes in duration. Because the information presented is of critical importance, the session should be held at a time most convenient to parents. In addition to sending invitations home with students inviting their parents to attend, other public relations techniques should be employed to encourage parents' attendance at this session. Provision should be made prior to Session 4 for any students not able to attend to receive a thorough explanation of the information presented.

It is suggested that some counselors, selected staff members, and students from the middle schools your students will attend be asked to participate with you in presenting information during this session. Suggestions regarding their participation are included in the descriptions of the session activities.

Before starting the session, be sure that every student and parent present has a copy of About The Middle School Years, Book 3 to use during the session. Have on hand some extra copies of the booklet for this purpose, which may be collected at the end of the session. Also, be sure to have an adequate supply of materials regarding your local middle school program.

Introduction to Session (5 minutes)

- Explain the purpose of the booklet and highlight the general content of each chapter. Show some of the other booklets in the Educational Opportunities in Virginia series, particularly After High School, Book 5. Refer to the availability of these publications at schools and public libraries.

- Review the purposes of the minicourse, the general content of the sessions, and the times the remaining sessions will be held. Encourage parents and students to ask questions about the course, the booklet, and any information presented. Emphasize the importance of parental involvement and encouragement in helping children plan for and succeed in middle school.

- Discuss briefly the information on the inside front cover of About the Middle School Years, Book 3. Be sure to make clear the interest of the principals, counselors, and teachers at this school and at the middle school in working with parents to help children plan for and benefit from their middle school education.

Presentation About Middle School Education and Its Importance (10 minutes)

This presentation should be made in a conversational style which encourages comments and questions.

- Begin by bringing the group's attention to "Educational Choices After High School," the chart on page 1 of the booklet. Briefly highlight each of the options shown on the chart, and point out that these are possibilities for their children after high school graduation. Explain that their children, upon becoming adults, will enter a changing and different society, one in which many of our present occupations will no longer exist and in which there will be many new kinds of occupations. To best prepare for the world in which they will live, students will need to get as much education or training as they are capable of achieving, not only for careers, but also for leading full and satisfying lives.

- Explain that many kinds of financial aid are available for students who want further education or training after high school.

- Middle school seems far removed from postsecondary education, training, and careers. In entering middle school, however, students are moving one step closer toward that part of their lives and are beginning to consider some choices for the future. Their middle school education will be important preparation for high school, as well as for their education, training, and careers afterwards.

- The key to entering any of these postsecondary education or training programs and qualifying for financial aid is for students to prepare themselves well in middle and high school by choosing courses wisely and succeeding in their studies.

- Emphasize the important role of parents in helping children plan their middle school programs of studies and encouraging them to do their best in school. In addition, point out the need for parents to encourage children to aim high for the future and get as much education or training as possible after high school.

Information About the Middle School Program of Studies (25 minutes)

Where possible, this information should be presented and discussed by middle school counselors from the schools students will attend. If this is not possible, the counselor or teacher conducting the session should thoroughly prepare in advance for this activity.

- Present in sequence the topics on pages 8 through 15 of the booklet, systematically explaining the middle school program of studies in your school division. Be sure to allow time for questions and answers in discussing each topic.

- Explain the program planning steps which will take place after this minicourse whereby students, with the help of their parents and counselors, will select their program of studies for their first year in middle school. Make clear the availability of the counselors' services to students and parents in this process.

Studying and Homework (15 minutes)

This presentation focuses upon 1) the importance of studying and homework in middle school, 2) suggestions for studying and homework, and 3) how parents may help in this area. This activity is especially effective when one or two middle school students are on hand to present the information about the first two topics. The counselor may then discuss how parents can help their children with studying and homework.

- In addition to their own comments about the importance of studying and homework, the students' presentation should incorporate the information about studying and homework on pages 4 and 5 of the booklet.

- The counselor's comments about how parents may help their children with studying and homework should include the following suggestions:

    - Show interest in your children's school work, including their studying and homework. Talk with them about what they are studying and learning and how they are doing in school. Review with them regularly their assignments, projects, papers, and other school materials.

    - Provide an area in your home where children may do their homework undisturbed. See to it that they have adequate lighting, a table or a desk, a chair, and necessary supplies such as pencils, paper, ruler, and dictionary.

    - Be sure that your children spend about 1½ to 2 hours each school day on studying and homework. Encourage them to set aside the same time each day for this purpose.

    - Insist that their homework be done daily and on time.

    - Do <u>not</u> permit study or homework time to be interrupted by phone calls or other activities.

    - Do <u>not</u> do your children's homework for them. When they need help in learning new concepts or information, however, assistance from parents in the form of explanation, clarification, or review can be valuable.

    - Show understanding of your children's efforts in studying and homework and their feelings when they encounter difficulties.

    - Encourage your children to ask their teachers for help with any study or homework assignments with which they have difficulty.

    - Confer with your children's teachers or counselors about ongoing difficulties with studying or homework.

    - Check over your children's homework with them after it is completed. Ask questions about what they have learned.

    - Encourage them to use the resources in the school and public libraries, and visit the public library with them regularly.

    - Encourage your children to do their best in their school work.

Presentation of Special Programs and Activities in Middle School (20 minutes)

This presentation provides information about the special programs and activities included in Chapter 2 of About the Middle School Years, Book 3. The information presented should describe these programs and activities as they are provided in your local middle schools. Some options for making this presentation are as follows.

Option 1. Organize a panel composed of appropriate faculty members and selected student leaders from the middle schools your students will attend. Panel members will present information about each of the topics discussed in Chapter 2 of About the Middle School Years. For example, the panel might consist of the principal, a guidance counselor, a teacher in the gifted and talented program, the librarian, a special education teacher, and a student. Each could present information about some of the special programs and activities in their middle school and also answer questions.

Option 2. If it is not feasible for the panel members to be present at the time of the group session, a videotape of their discussion could be made and shown. The counselor or teacher in the host school would need to be prepared to answer questions following the showing of the tape.

Option 3. Present the information yourself. Be certain to have up-to-date facts about the special programs and activities at the schools your students will attend.

- Before concluding this session, announce that you are planning two sessions for parents about the characteristics of middle school students and effective parenting techniques, as presented in Chapter 4 of the booklet. Poll the parents present regarding their interest in participating and convenient times for the sessions. Tell them that more information will be forthcoming about these sessions.

SESSION 4

This session is used for the group presentations about middle school subjects which were assigned in Session 2. If time allows, students also will begin to consider which elective or exploratory courses offered in grade 6 are of highest interest to them. If the entire session is used for the group reports, this latter activity can be begun as an outside assignment.

Presentation of Group Reports (30 minutes)

- Allow time after each presentation for questions and comments.

Consideration of Electives for Grade 6 (10 minutes)

- This activity should be conducted during this session only if adequate time remains after the group presentations.

- Review the required subjects in grade 6 (page 8 in the booklet).

- Provide a list for each student of the elective or exploratory courses offered in grade 6 in the middle school they will attend. Inform them that they will be able to choose one elective each semester in grade 6 (or the number allowed in your division).

- Stimulate a discussion about the advantages of having the opportunity to choose elective or exploratory courses. Help them understand the following steps for choosing electives:

    1. Look at all the course options available to you.

    2. Consider your interests and abilities. How are they related to any of these options?

    3. Consider what each option may mean to you; i.e., the possible advantages or disadvantages of each.

    4. If none of the electives seem related to your special interests, consider which might help you acquire some interesting knowledge and skills.

    5. Select the electives which seem to offer the most benefits for you now and in the future.

- Inform the students that they will not have to choose their elective courses until the end of the minicourse. Minicourse activities are to prepare them for making their choices.

Ask the Students to Complete the Following Activities Before the Next Session

- Go over the list of elective or exploratory courses with your parents. Tell them about the two which seem most interesting to you at this time, and why. Get their reactions. Remember that you do not have to make final decisions now. Many activities in the next two sessions will help you in deciding.

SESSION 5

This first part of this session is devoted to a brief discussion about elective courses of interest to the students. The remaining time is used for completing the activities listed in Chapter 3 of the booklet.

Discussion of Elective Courses (10 minutes)

- Conduct a discussion of the elective courses students have identified as most interesting to them. Encourage them to describe why they chose those particular courses and their parents' reactions to the ones they had identified as most interesting. What suggestions or advice did their parents offer? Were some students unable to find one or two interesting electives? Reassure these students that the activities which will be conducted in this session and the next are likely to help them in deciding.

Activities for Learning More About Yourself (15-20 minutes)

- Ask the class to turn to Chapter 3 in the booklet.

- Present in your own words the information in "Getting Ready for Your Future" (page 25).

- Ask them to read "Learning Abo[illegible]ourself," (page 26).

- When they have finished reading, find out what they have learned from this section. Pose questions to which they may respond regarding how learning about yourself can help you and some ways to find out more about yourself. Conclude the discussion by emphasizing that knowing about yourself helps in choosing middle school courses and activities which best suit you.

- Introduce "Some Exercises to Help You Learn More About Yourself" (page 26). Explain the information and directions in the paragraph preceding the exercise itself. Help the class define the meaning of "interests."

- Ask the students to complete carefully the exercise, "My Interests," on pages 27 and 28, stopping when they have finished the checklist which ends in the middle of the first column, page 28. Tell them to feel free to ask for help if they need it. Emphasize that they need not rush in completing this activity, but should think carefully in responding to the items.

- The counselor or teacher should be sensitive to any students who may have some difficulty with this activity and should offer assistance when needed.

- When the class has completed this first part of the interests activity, explain the directions for deciding their three activities of highest interest. Allow adequate time for them to decide and record their answers.

- Repeat this procedure with the sections about school subjects and hobbies related to their activities of highest interest. Some discussion and assistance may be necessary to help them understand these relationships.

Small Group Activity (10 minutes)

- Have the students gather in the work groups formed during Session 2.

- Ask them to share and discuss in the groups their choices of the three activities of highest interest, the school subjects which can help them with their activities of highest interest, and their hobbies related to these activities of highest interest. Remind them of the group rules; announce a time limit of six minutes for this task.

- Call time after six minutes. Ask if the members of the groups had similar or different interests and hobbies. What did they learn about themselves that they did not know before doing the exercise?

Ask the Students to Complete the Following Activities Before the Next Session

- Take the booklet home and complete the exercise, "My Abilities and Characteristics," pages 28 through 31, stopping before the exercise, "What I Have Learned From These Activities." Ask your parents for help with any words or items you do not understand.

- Discuss with your parents your answers to the exercises, "My Interests" and "My Abilities and Characteristics."

- Bring your completed exercises to the next session.

SESSION 6

This final session of the minicourse is used for 1) helping students draw some conclusions about themselves from the exercises they have completed in Chapter 3 of the booklet, 2) introducing them to the relationship between interests and career choices, and 3) encouraging them to learn more about themselves and careers related to their interests while they are in middle school. In addition, an opportunity is provided for the class to evaluate their experiences in the minicourse, and to discuss "A Message to Students," page 55 of the booklet.

Completion of Exercise, "What I Have Learned From These Activities," (15 minutes)

In preparation for this exercise, ask the students to look over their responses in the exercises they have completed about their interests, abilities, and

characteristics. They should pay particular attention to responses about the three activities of highest interest to them, the five abilities and characteristics most true of them, and the six things they most like to do.

- Ask them to complete the statements in the section, "What I Have Learned From These Activities," page 31. Urge them to think carefully in deciding about their answers and remind them that there are no right or wrong answers. Also, tell them that they will not have to share any of their answers in class unless they wish to.

- Allow time for informal sharing of responses to this exercise by students who wish to participate. Those who prefer to observe rather than participate should be reassured of their right to do so.

Presentation: The Relationship of Interests to Careers (15 minutes)

- Present the information in "Learning About Careers," page 32.

- Emphasize that although they will not choose careers until they are much older, it is helpful to begin learning about careers related to one's own interests while in middle school. This knowledge helps in choosing middle and high school programs of studies.

- Review the career fields and the major interests of workers in each field, as shown on the chart, pages 33 through 35. Explain that only a few occupations for each career field are shown on the chart; show them some materials with more extensive information about occupations.

- Remind them that they have learned in this minicourse about their own interests. Are there any career fields on the chart in which workers have interests similar to their own? Allow some time for their responses to this question. In this discussion, be sure to point out that some of their interests may change as they grow older, but some will remain constant.

- Reiterate that there are many different occupations in each career field and that certain kinds of education or training are necessary for entering these occupations. Using one of the career fields, provide some examples of occupations in the same field which require different levels or types of education. (About High School, Book 4 contains this information.)

- Explain that there are many ways for them to learn about careers related to their interests while they are in middle school. Ask the class to read pages 36 and 37. When they have finished, discuss with them what they have read. Provide opportunities for them to react to the suggestions in the booklet about ways to explore careers in middle school.

Presentation of A Message to Students (5 minutes)

- Conduct a discussion about the information in "A Message to Students," page 54 of the booklet, with particular emphasis upon students' taking responsibility for their own success in middle school.

Evaluation of Minicourse (5 minutes)

- Evaluation of this minicourse may be conducted through a class discussion, small group discussions and recommendations, or the use of a short evaluation form. In many situations, the most effective technique is likely to be the use of a short evaluation form which allows students to state privately and anonymously their opinions of their experiences in the course. Counselors or teachers conducting the course may provide a short, simply-worded questionnaire or rating form for this purpose. Included in this instrument should be items related to student learning, their level of satisfaction with the course activities and modes of course presentation, and the degree of parental participation in activities assigned to students for completion at home. Space should also be provided on the form for students to suggest ways to improve the course.

- In concluding this final session of the minicourse, reiterate that you are available to pursue further with them, individually or in groups, any of the topics covered in the course. Assure them that they will have the opportunity for counseling to make firmer decisions and plans for middle school.

PARENT SESSIONS BASED ON CHAPTER 4 OF ABOUT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS, BOOK 3

The purposes of the two parent sessions which follow are to increase parents' knowledge of early adolescent development and encourage their use of constructive childrearing methods during the middle school years. Opportunities are provided in the sessions for parents to ask questions and discuss typical parent concerns. The sessions, however, are not designed as counseling groups for resolving chronic childrearing problems for which counseling seems advisable. Information about sources of assistance, as well as help with referrals, should be provided for parents experiencing these problems. In addition, the counselor leading these sessions should conduct them in such a way that a parent may not monopolize the time to the extent that the goals of the group may not be achieved.

These sessions, designed primarily to provide information, may be conducted with large groups of parents. Intermittent opportunities are provided within the sessions for some small group discussions. The sessions are one hour and 30 minutes in duration and should be held no more than 10 days apart. Parents should be encouraged to attend both sessions and complete the reading assigned.

SESSION 1

Introductory Activity (10 minutes)

- Welcome the group; include comments about the important role parents play in the lives of middle school students in terms of academic, personal/social, and physical development.

- Explain the purposes of the sessions and how and when they will be conducted. Be sure to stress the sequential nature of the sessions; i.e., information discussed in the first sessions will be important to understanding content of second sessions. Point out the fact that these sessions are just an initial effort to help parents better understand and rear their middle school children. Throughout the middle school years parents should feel free to contact their children's counselors and teachers for help with childrearing concerns or difficulties.

- Define group parameters regarding matters such as starting and ending the sessions on time.

- Point out that these sessions are to provide information and help in childrearing in the middle school years, and are not designed to provide individual counseling for parents.

- Make clear your willingness to answer questions throughout the session activities as well as your availability to talk with them individually between sessions.

- Encourage and respond to questions about the forthcoming sessions.

- Ask them to introduce themselves to the persons sitting on both sides of them.

- Distribute copies of About the Middle School Years, Book 3 for parents to keep during the duration of the two sessions.

Presentation: Why the Early Adolescent Years Are an Especially Important Time for Children and Their Parents (10 minutes)

- Begin by asking the parents to recall their own early adolescence. What was it like? How did they feel and behave? Can they remember some especially confusing or difficult events during those years? Elicit a few responses to these questions. If none are offered, provide a brief ancedote from your own early adolescence to illustrate what a difficult period this stage can be.

- State that many adults tend to think of the growing up years from ages 11 to 14 as being fun for children. They seem to have forgotten what a challenging stage of life it is. Early adolescence tends to be a stage of

disequilibrium during which children are often at odds with themselves and their world. It is, however, a natural stage of development and cannot be skipped or avoided. Because it is typically a rather difficult time for children, it is also typically a rather difficult time for their parents. Early adolescents need their parents' help, interest, and understanding for healthy development during these critical years.

- Present the information in "A Message to Parents," page 39 of the booklet. Stimulate discussion and encourage questions as you proceed.

- Presentation and Discussion: What Early Adolescents Are Like (30 minutes)

- Ask the group to read pages 40 and 41 in the booklet; allow time for them to complete this reading.

- With the assistance and involvement of the group, summarize and discuss what they have read, briefly highlighting each of the following:

  - The physical development of early adolescence and how parents may help children adapt to and cope with the physical changes of this period. (Be sure to include consideration of how parents may help children who do not begin to mature as early as their peers.)

  - The influence of other adults and peers in the lives of early adolescents; parents' reactions to children's increased interests and activities outside the family; peer influence and peer pressure; and the need for rules regarding children's activities.

  - The social development of early adolescents; parents' roles in helping children participate in activities appropriate to their level of development; setting rules and preventing children from undertaking inappropriate activities.

  - The emotional development of early adolescents; their typical attitudes, feelings, and behaviors; and the importance of parents' reactions to these attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Tell the group that the information about techniques for rearing early adolescents, which will be presented in this and the following session, can assist them to help their children experience healthy emotional, social, and academic development.

  - Academic development; children's responsibilities; parents' roles and responsibilities regarding children's academic progress.

- The importance of understanding the characteristics and development of early adolescents; the availability of help if problems arise.

- Ask for and answer questions about any of the topics discussed in this activity.

Small Group Discussions (20 minutes)

- Request that groups be formed consisting of four or five members. Ask that husbands and wives do not join the same group.

- Ask one member of each group to volunteer to take notes about what is discussed in the group.

- The groups are to consider and discuss what they hope to learn in these sessions. In doing this, they may identify particular areas of concern regarding raising early adolescents.

- Inform them of a 15-minute time limit for this task.

- Call time after 15 minutes and ask each recorder to report about their discussions.

- In summarizing these reports, the counselor or group leader should point out the similarities and differences in what parents hope to learn and the childrearing concerns reported.

Presentation: Parent-Child Relationships (20 minutes)

- Introduce this activity by asking what most of us, as adults, want and need from our family relationships. Encourage parents to respond to this question.

- State that children also have needs regarding family relationships. It is important to their healthy development that they feel a sense of belonging--that they are needed and wanted in their families; a sense of significance--that they are important and make a difference in the lives of those close to them; a sense of security--that their basic needs will be met and that their world is dependable and predictable; and a sense of competency--that they are capable and can accomplish what is expected of them and what they expect of themselves.

- Present and discuss in depth the information in About The Middle School Years regarding parent-child relationships, including the sections, "Giving Love" and "Showing Respect," page 42.

Ask the Parents to Complete the Following Activity for the Next Session

- Review the information in the booklet which was discussed in this session.
- Read pages 43 to 54 in the booklet.

SESSION 2

Presentation of Communication Techniques (25 minutes)

- Review briefly the introductory information and the content of the sections about empathic listening and empathic responding on pages 43 and 44 of the booklet.
- Distribute to each parent a list of typical statements of early adolescent children, such as the following:

1. "You're always picking on me."
2. "You never let me do anything the other kids do."
3. "I hate social studies. What difference does it make if I learn that stuff!"
4. "I wish I had been invited to the party."
5. "I'm going to the basketball game after school on Friday. I can hardly wait!"
6. "Why doesn't anyone in this family ever agree with me?"
7. "Betty and Ann always whisper together when I'm around. I know they are talking about me."
8. "The guys on the team really don't want me to play. Guess I'm not good enough."

- Ask the parents to identify the feelings underlying each statement. Have them write the appropriate feeling beside each statement on the list.
- Read aloud each statement in turn and elicit responses from the group regarding the feelings they have identified.
- Emphasize that empathic listening--listening for children's feelings--is a technique which can be acquired quite easily with some practice.
- Ask the group to form small groups of three members to develop an empathic response a parent might make to each statement on the practice sheet. Allow about 8 minutes for this task.

- Ask for empathic responses to each of the statements. Discuss these responses and provide suggestions for alternative responses, where appropriate.

Review and Discussion of Self-Statements, Restatements, and the Use of Logical and Natural Consequences (20 minutes)

- Review and discuss the information about self-statements and restatements on page 45 of the booklet.

- Ask the group to identify some ongoing areas of conflict they have with their children.

- Assist them to develop parents' self-statements and restatements appropriate to several areas of conflict they have identified.

- Review the information about the uses of logical and natural consequences on pages 46 and 47 of the booklet.

- Using several areas of conflict identified earlier in this activity, help the group to formulate an appropriate logical or natural consequence for each.

- Ask each parent to think of an area of ongoing conflict with his/her own child.

- Suggest that each parent write on a piece of paper a parent self-statement, a restatement, and a logical or natural consequence appropriate to the identified area of conflict. Some of these may be shared and discussed as part of this activity.

- Encourage them to try these techniques at home with their children. Emphasize the importance of consistency in using these methods.

Presentation About Encouraging Independence, Helping to Develop Responsibility, Helping Children to Succeed in Middle School, Coping with Mistakes and Failures, and Recognizing Children's Efforts and Accomplishments (15 minutes)

- Present an overview of the information in these sections; have a brief question and answer period.

Discussion and Role Play of Family Meetings (15 minutes)

- Review briefly the information about holding family meetings, pages 50 to 52 of the booklet.

- Ask for some volunteers to role play a family meeting, and assign the roles of parents and children to the volunteers. Be specific in describing the

roles they are to play. For example, the family might consist of a father, mother, and three children, ages 14, 12, and 10. Or the role play might be about a single parent family with a father and two children, ages 13 and 9.

- Provide a problem or topic for the meeting, such as a situation in which one child always borrows the other child's belongings and does not return them, or the parent needs more help and cooperation from the children in doing household chores. Use your imagination to develop an appropriate topic and roles for the meeting.

- Allow a few minutes for the "family" to confer and plan prior to beginning the role play. Inform them that the role play should last about five minutes.

- Call time at the end of the five or six minutes. Assist the larger group to analyze the role play in terms of the information they have learned about holding family meetings.

- Encourage parents to try family meetings at home. Urge them to hold several before deciding whether or not this approach may be helpful in their families.

Discussion of Getting Help When Problems Arise and Must Parents Be Perfect (10 minutes)

- Present the information in the section, "Getting Help When Problems Arise," page 53 of the booklet. Emphasize the importance of seeking assistance for children's problems as early as possible, the availability of professional help from school and community resources, and counselor confidentiality when parents seek help.

- Summarize the information in "Must Parents Be Perfect?" page 54. Focus upon the importance of consistency in rearing children and parents being able to make occasional childrearing mistakes without seriously harming their children. Discuss also the role of humor in childrearing and that parents may sometimes find it helpful to admit to their children that they have made a mistake.

- Conclude the session by encouraging them to use the childrearing techniques they have learned, and to stay in contact with their children's principal, teachers, and counselors regarding their children's progress and plans for middle school.

Evaluation (5 minutes)

It is advisable to provide an opportunity for parents to evaluate these parent sessions and to suggest topics for possible future parent sessions. The group leader should provide an evaluation form for this purpose.